ELL Reader

Science

Science

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Jules Verne's Imagination



by Yoshi Fukuda





Jules Verne's
Imagination

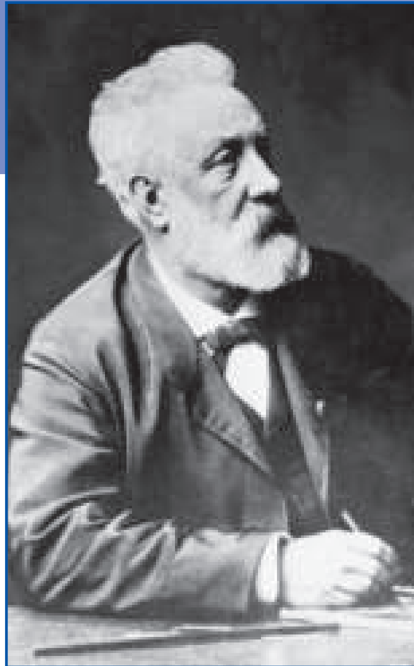
by Yoshi Fukuda





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Jules Verne as a young man and later in life

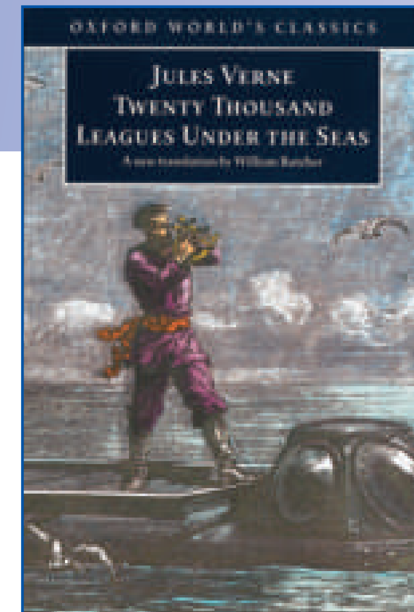

All fiction writers use imagination to make up stories. Science fiction writers use imagination and science together.

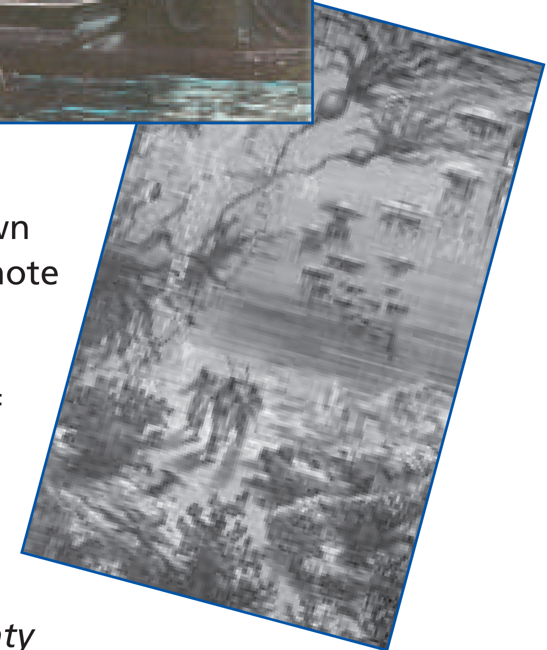
There were very few science fiction writers before the late 1800s. Then a man named Jules Verne began to write about flying machines, Moon men, and other imagined things. After that, many writers wrote science fiction.

Jules Verne was born in 1828, in a small town in France. His father was a lawyer. He hoped Jules would also be a lawyer. But Jules had other ideas. He loved adventure stories and dreamed of world travel, and he began writing his own stories.

imagination: the power to make pictures or ideas in the mind of things that do not exist





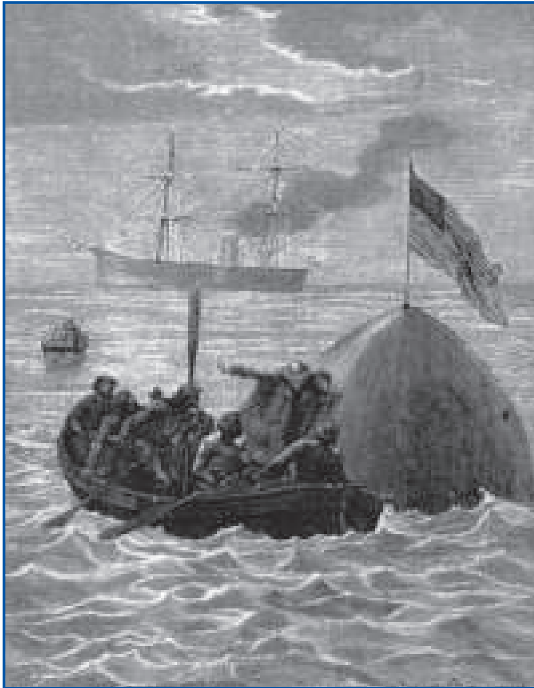



In addition to adventure, Jules also loved to learn new things. When he was starting to write, he spent many hours in the library. He loved to read about the latest scientific discoveries. He wrote down what he had learned on note cards. Later he used the notes to write his books.

Jules Verne was one of the most popular writers of the 1800s. He is still popular today. Two of his most famous books, *Around the World in Eighty Days* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* have been made into famous movies. Verne was one of the first writers to combine scientific facts with fantasy adventures. In many ways, he truly was the first science fiction writer.

fantasy: invented stories with strange settings and characters







After visiting the Moon, the space capsule in Verne's story plunged into the Pacific Ocean.



From the Earth to the Moon

In 1865, Jules Verne wrote a story about moon travel. He called the book *From the Earth to the Moon.* His fictional space travelers were Americans who began their flight in Florida. Their spacecraft was shaped like a cone and traveled faster than sound. Verne thought that a spacecraft returning from the Moon would travel very fast. For a soft landing, his fictional space craft plunged into the ocean on its return from the Moon.

All of these things happened on the first trip to the Moon in 1969. Many of Verne's details were amazingly correct. For example, Verne's spacecraft was a similar shape and size to the real one used more than 100 years later.





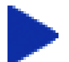
Let's read about some of the similarities and differences between Verne's imaginary trip to the Moon and the real trips made more than 100 years later.

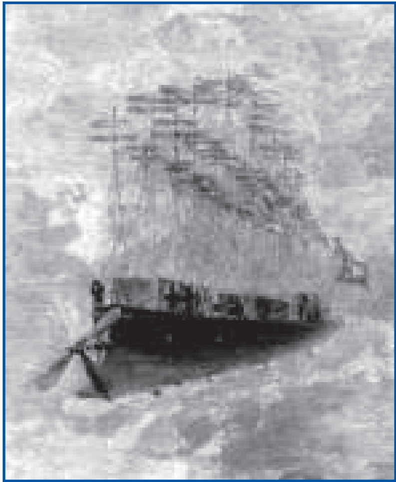
Similarities	Differences
Both Verne's and the real Moon spacecraft were launched from the coast of Florida.	Verne's Moon travelers brought a pet dog with them. No pets were allowed on the first real trip to the Moon.
Both spacecraft were shaped like cones and were similar in size.	His capsule was shot at the Moon from a very large gun. In reality we launch spacecrafts with rockets.
Verne's spacecraft used jet engines to change the spacecraft's direction, as real spacecraft did later.	Verne's space travelers fought unfriendly Moon men. In reality no one lives on the Moon. Astronauts did not have to fight Moon men.
Both spacecraft plunged into the ocean at the end of their flight.	

The shape of the space capsule imagined by Verne was very similar to the space capsules used to land on the Moon more than 100 years later.

This capsule was used in 1969 for a real trip to the Moon.

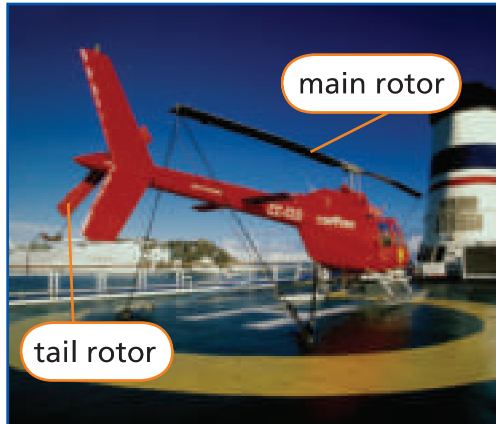








In his book, Verne's "helicopter" had 37 propellers to keep it in the air and two propellers to move it forward.



A real helicopter needs only two rotors to fly.



Jules Verne's Flying Machine

In the middle 1800s, scientists were discovering many new things. Verne loved to think about ideas people had for flying machines. He wrote a book about a flying machine that used propellers to hover in the air. Verne's flying machine looks like a sailing ship with propellers instead of sails. In the story it could fly 120 miles per hour. In reality, a large ship of such a design could not fly at all.

Most real helicopters use two rotors to fly. The main rotor lifts the helicopter into the air. The tail rotor is used to keep the helicopter from spinning around in the same direction as the main rotor.

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hover: remain suspended in air over an object or a place

rotors: propellers used to lift or control a helicopter







Some of Verne's books inspired real world explorers.



Jules Verne Inspired Explorers

Long before Jules Verne was born, people wanted to explore the North Pole and the South Pole. Verne was not the first person with that idea. But he told an exciting story about a polar explorer in a book called *Voyages and Adventures of Captain Hatteras.* The story took place more than forty years before real explorers reached the Poles.

Verne's stories inspired explorers to follow their dreams. One of his most popular books was called *Around the World in Eighty Days.* It is the story of a man traveling on trains and ships around the world. The book was a great success in 1873.

Sixteen years later an adventurer from Pennsylvania named Nelly Bly thought she could do better. She completed a journey around the world in seventy-two days and six hours. She even visited Jules Verne at his home during her journey.



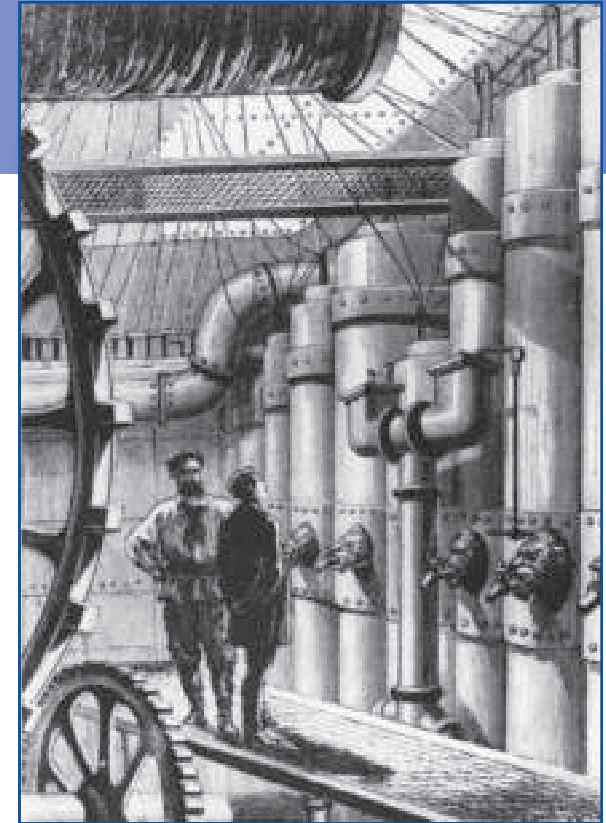


In *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the *Nautilus* got its power from the ocean.





The engine room of the *Nautilus*





Verne's Submarine: The *Nautilus*

Many people say *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* is Verne's best book. It is the story of Captain Nemo and the adventures in his submarine, the *Nautilus.* In one adventure in the story, a giant octopus attacks the submarine. In another, men walk on the bottom of the ocean in special diving suits.

The submarine *Nautilus* was one of the most amazing things in the book. It used electricity for all of its power. It had electric clocks and electric lights. Even more amazing, the *Nautilus* got its electricity right from the ocean. If it stayed in the water, the *Nautilus* never ran out of power.

Verne wrote *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* in 1870. Submarines—ships that travel under water— existed, but people didn't have electric lights. Submarines moved through the water with a propeller that people turned by hand. Submarines were only large enough to hold a few people at a time and could only stay under water for a short time.



Verne's *Nautilus* was a wonderful imaginary ship. It was huge and grand and was protected by thick armor. Its library had 12,000 books. It had carpets and fine paintings everywhere. The air was always fresh and comfortable. Air conditioning did not exist, but in his book Verne came up with the idea of keeping the air fresh inside the ship.

Captain Nemo knew how to get food from the sea. He used seaweed to make salads. He even made tasty desserts from whale's milk. Living on the *Nautilus* was like staying at a fancy hotel with a first-class restaurant.

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first-class: best quality





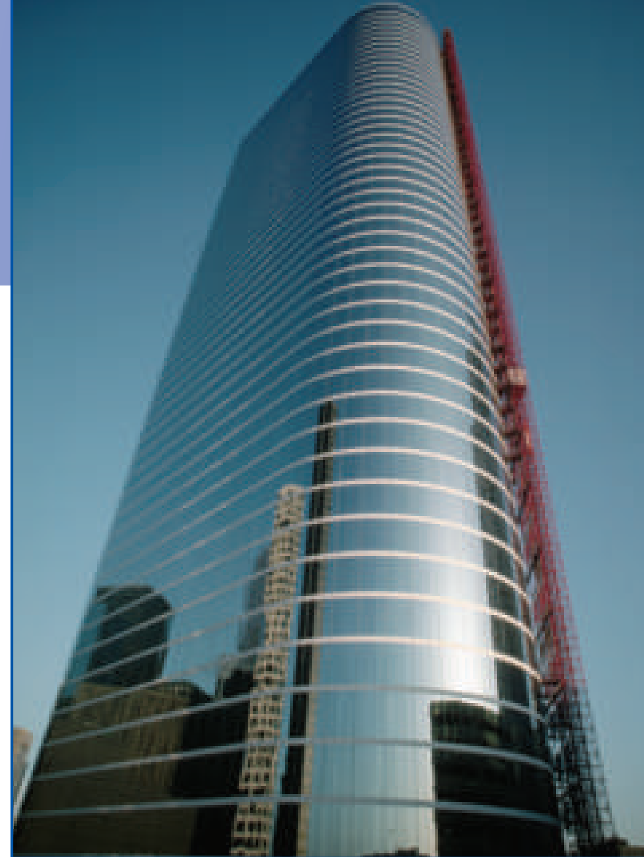


Jules Verne Imagined Cities of the Future

Jules Verne wrote only a few books about the future. In these books he pictured a world where everyone had electric lights. Skyscrapers made of steel and glass stood more than 900 feet high. People watched reports from Mars and Venus on machines like our television sets. They had telephones with both pictures and sound. They traveled on high-speed trains or drove cars on streets 100 feet wide.

At work, people used calculating machines with keyboards. They were a lot like the computers we have in homes and offices today. There was even a worldwide communication system that reminds some people of the Internet.

Jules Verne wanted to know about every scientific discovery and to imagine how science could help people. But he also knew that not everything in the future would be better than it was in the present. Even in his time, he could see that people working in new factories and offices were not always happy.



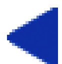


Verne thought large steel and glass skyscrapers, like these, would be built in the 1900s.



In 1863 Verne wrote a book called *Paris in the Twentieth Century.* In this book Verne imagined what life would be like in 1960. He saw a clean and tidy world. But the people were not happy. No one cared about poetry or plays anymore. Students studied subjects such as science and math all day. Grown-ups only cared about making money and buying things.

Paris in the Twentieth Century was a sad book, and Verne's publisher told him people would not like it. So Verne set the book aside and worked on happier stories. In 1996 someone found a copy of *Paris in the Twentieth Century* locked in a safe. It was published, and Jules Verne was once again a best-selling author, long after he had died.









Jules Verne Imagined Other Machines and Adventures

Jules Verne wrote more than eighty books, most of them full of inventions and predictions. He predicted travel to other planets and man-made satellites that could orbit around the earth. He imagined long-distance travel in balloons and motion pictures, or movies.

Using his imagination, Jules Verne wrote about many things that eventually became science facts. He did not always know exactly how they would work. But his ideas were wonderful to read about.

What kinds of inventions can you imagine for the future?





Talk About It

1. How is Jules Verne's "helicopter" on page 6 like a real helicopter? How is it different?
2. What was life like on Captain Nemo's submarine, the *Nautilus?*

Write About It

3. Jules Verne had ideas for wonderful inventions. Think about a new invention you would like to use. On a separate paper, draw your invention and describe it.

Extend Language

Many modern inventions have names that come from Greek and Latin words. The words for these inventions can be nearly the same in different languages. For example, the word *telephone* comes from the Greek words *tele* (far off) and *phone* (voice or sound). Related words are *teléfono* in Spanish, *téléphone* in French, and *telefonowac* in Polish.

Find out the origins of the following words, and learn how to say them in another language.

television computer automobile

Photographs

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